

DANVILLE – Mayor Scott Eisenhauer said he plans to testify Monday when an Illinois House committee takes up a gambling expansion bill that includes a riverboat casino for Danville.

The House Executive Committee is scheduled to consider SB 737 Monday afternoon. The legislation calls for five new casinos – in Danville, Chicago, Rockford, near Waukegan and in the south suburbs – as

well as electronic gaming at horse racing tracks and expanded gaming positions at the current nine existing casinos in Illinois.

"I recognize that there are still some challenges with the bill," Eisenhauer said. "Some legislators still feel as though the bill may be too large or too heavy. Some are concerned about whether this bill is going to be tied to any others, such as the income tax increase. But I'm a little more optimistic this time, just in the fact that there are so few options out there today to generate revenue and at the same time create employment opportunities."

Eisenhauer calls the legislation "an economic development bill for Danville."

"To me that's the bigger message: yes, it creates revenue for the state and for us. But what's most exciting to me and should be to any legislator is that this is an opportunity to create, at least in Danville, a thousand jobs. While you can talk about other revenue generators, none of them also talk about the employment aspect.

"An income tax certainly generates dollars the state needs but it doesn't increase the number of employment opportunities. A tax on services creates revenue but it won't generate jobs. That's the message I'm trying to send."

Eisenhauer said he has sent a letter to central Illinois state representatives, explaining his support for the bill, and noted that recently retired state Rep. Bill Black of Danville mailed a letter to all his House colleagues asking for their support.

The mayor said he'll also "be knocking on some doors" at the Statehouse Monday, asking

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lawmakers to support the gambling expansion.

If the bill clears the Executive Committee Monday, Eisenhower said a full House vote could come as soon as Tuesday "and I would certainly be staying over there to talk to as many people as we can."

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